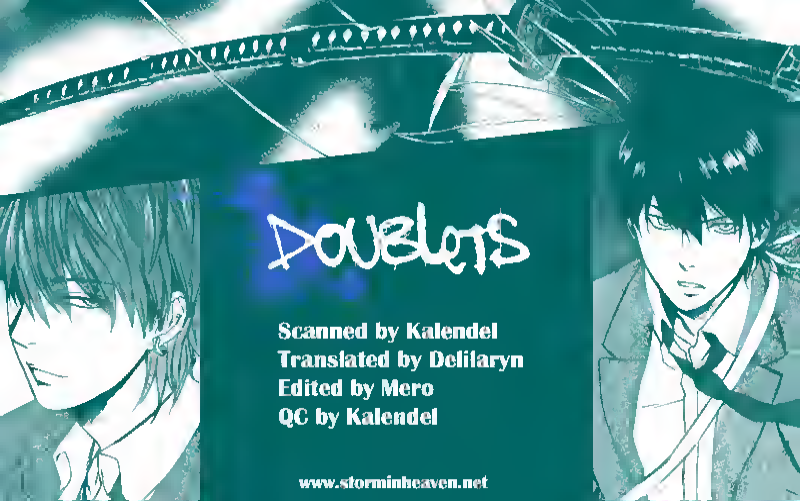

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Chapter One
Voice
DOUBLETS
Desire, and hold out all that is precious to you...
九號
Kyuugou

DESIRE.
THUD
THUD
THUD
DESIRE.

DESIRE.
SFX: FWOOSH
...!
THIS IS AS FAR AS YOU GO.
COME.
SOUSUKE-SAMA.
.....

SFX: THUNK
!
!
!
...AYABE.
CHIKAGAMI.

DESIRE!
bdmP
DESIRE.
bdmP
SFX: BOOM

.....
...AGAIN.

THAT VOICE AGAIN...
chirp
chirp
Elm Garden Children's Home
YAAAAWN
OH, MY THAT WAS QUITE THE YAWN!
ARE YOU STILL NOT GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP, TOUMA?
stomp
stomp
stomp
YEAH. . I'VE BEEN HAVING KINDA BAD DREAMS LATELY.
sigh
I HEAR STRANGE VOICES AND STUFF...

YURA-CHAN!
DON'T TAKE WHAT HE SAYS SERIOUSLY, AKI!
Aki
Sasa

...?
Vinegar?
IT REALLY SUCKS!
munch
munch

HUH?
IT'S ALREADY AFTER SEVEN!
HUH?!
AND WHAT'RE YOU EATING SO SLOWLY FOR?

NO WAY!
Oh my, tee hee!
I'M GOING NOW, YOU CAN CATCH UP.
HUH?!
WHA...
BE CARE-FUL!
WAI...
STOMP
STOMP
CLATTER
RATTLE

AFTER ALL, IT'S ONLY A DREAM, RIGHT?
I BET HE DOESN'T EVEN REMEMBER WHAT IT WAS ABOUT.

WAI...
HOLD ON...
wobble
IT'S ALL BECAUSE YOU SLEPT IN LATE!
I JUST ATE, MY STOMACH IS...
IT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE RUNNING, YURA.
COME ON, TOUMA, HURRY UP
WAI...
SO IT'S MY FAULT?!
.....
A CROW?

...I DON'T THINK SO...
..TOUMA!
...THAT BIRD IS HUGE!
YES, YES!
YOU SHOULD REALLY FIX THAT SPACING OUT HABIT OF YOURS!
?
I WASN'T SPACING OUT
YOU WERE TOO!
FOOOOSSS

DING
DONG
Tennouzaka High
DING
DONG
YAAAWN
Fuuuuuuuuu
HAAH...
NOT ENOUGH SLEEP AGAIN, TOUMA?

HERE
Class Duty Log
2-B
flip
HUH? WHAT'S THIS...
YOU'VE GOT CIRCLES UNDER YOUR EYES
.....
YOU TOTALLY FORGOT THAT YOU'RE ON CLASS DUTY TODAY, DIDN'T YOU. .
OH.
AND BY THE WAY, TEACH SAID TO EXPLAIN IT ALL TO KASUGA, SINCE HE'S THE NEXT ONE ON DUTY.
Class Duty Kasuga Tour
WHO'S KASUGA?
YEAH. YOU PROBABLY WOULDN'T REMEMBER.
THE MYSTERIOUS TRANSFER STUDENT!

HE TRANSFERRED IN A WEEK AGO. DON'T YOU REMEMBER ALL THAT FUSS ABOUT SOMEONE TRANSFERRING IN ALL OF A SUDDEN THIS TIME OF YEAR?
HIM. KASUGA SOUSUKE
HIS POPULARITY'S SKYROCKETED AMONG THE GIRLS, THOUGH...
It's so I hear!
DING DONG
-THANKS FOR THE UNNECESSARY INFORMATION-
ANYWAY!
SURE YOU DO IT BEFORE THE TEACHER STARTS RAILING ON YOU
YEAH...
DING DONG

...SOMEWHERE IN THE CITY...
YOU STILL HAVEN'T FOUND OUT WHERE THE KASUGA HEIR IS?!
A FULL TWO WEEKS HAVE ALREADY PASSED SINCE THE HEIR RAN AWAY!
WHY DID WE JOIN UP WITH THEM?
tap
THE FAMILY OF SWORD GUARDIANS? DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH!
tap
tap
NO
WE ARE CONTINUING THE SEARCH, BUT WE STILL...
AND WHAT ARE THE OTHER BRANCHES OF THE KASUGA FAMILY DOING?!

IT RUINS YOUR BEAUTY.
!
OH, DON'T GET SO RILED UP, KARINO-SENSEI.
.....
IORI... KUN.

〒162-0065 東京都新宿区住吉町4-8 ローベル神楽坂ビル7F
リブレ編集部 クロフネZERO係
九鬼先生

クロフネ創刊おめでとうございます！記念すべき創刊号に参加できて光栄です！

くんよりくんさい

.....
WHY YOU?
UH, WELL...
AND THE TEACHERS TOLD ME TO, YOU KNOW, HELP YOU OUT AND STUFF...
I'VE GOT CLASS-ROOM DUTY TODAY,
CHATTER
AND SINCE YOU JUST TRANSFERRED HERE...
CHATTER
NATSUME!
FWIP
C'MERE A MIN-UTE!
...IT'S BECAUSE KAISUKI'S RIGHT AFTER YOU IN ROLL CALL.
IT'S NOT THAT HARD TO FIGURE OUT!
AH!
YEAH, THAT'S IT!
AND ME.
SORRY ABOUT THAT
HE'S ALWAYS LIKE THIS...
I
WELL, JUST GO ALONG WITH IT FOR TODAY.

.....
silence

OH!
AND THIS BIG LUG HERE IS ONODERA NATSUME!
fwip
WHO'S A BIG LUG?!
AND!
I'M KAGAMI TOUMA.
NICE TO MEET YOU!

.....
IF YOU WANT TO KNOW WHERE SOUSUKE IS, THEN I ALREADY KNOW

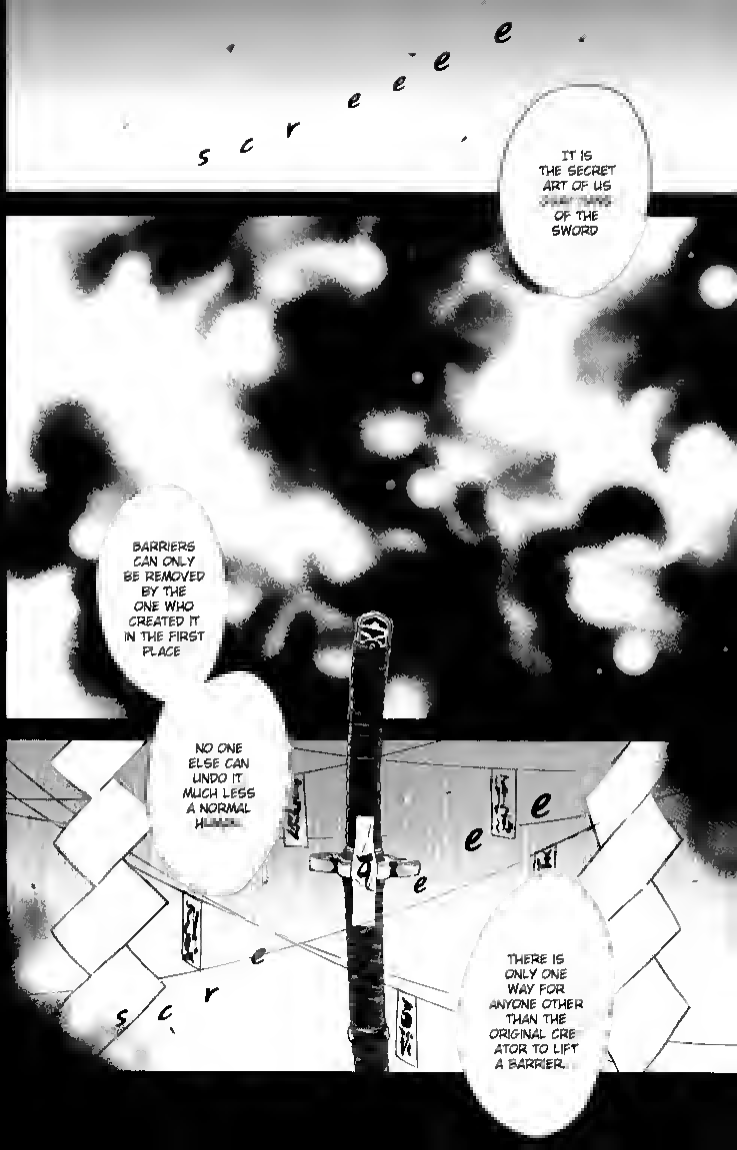
.....
NICE TO MEET YOU..

WHAT?!
NOT LYING WHEN I SAY THAT IT TOOK A WHILE TO CHASE HIM DOWN
HE'S NOT THE HEIR OF THE MAIN FAMILY FOR NOTHING... YOU KNOW
THE FACT IS THAT HE'S PLOWING THROUGH ALL OF OUR SHIKI ON HIS OWN NO SWEAT
WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME?!
I JUST DID.
...! THIS ISN'T A GAME YOU KNOW!

...I DON'T CARE ABOUT ANY OF THAT...
TMD
TELL ME.
WELL, TO BE HONEST, I HADN'T THOUGHT THAT HE'D GET THIS FAR.
.....

WHERE IS THE TSUKUYOMI?!

TENNOUZAKA HIGH SCHOOL...
SOUSUKE AND THE TSUKUYOMI ARE BOTH THERE!
EQUIPMENT ROOM #3
I BET SOUSUKE'S ALREADY LAID A BARRIER ON THE TSUKUYOMI.


screeee
IT IS THE SECRET ART OF US [illegible] OF THE SWORD
BARRIERS CAN ONLY BE REMOVED BY THE ONE WHO CREATED IT IN THE FIRST PLACE
NO ONE ELSE CAN UNDO IT MUCH LESS A NORMAL HUMAN
THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY FOR ANYONE OTHER THAN THE ORIGINAL CREATOR TO LIFT A BARRIER.
screeee

!
PERHAPS IT WAS AN ATTEMPT AT CAMOU-FLAGE...
BUT EITHER WAY, DOES ANY-ONE THINK WE'D JUST LET IT GO IF SOMEONE TRIED TO ESCAPE AMONGST MERE COMMONERS?
AND THAT IS TO STAIN IT WITH THE DEAD FLESH OF ITS CREATOR.
HOW NAIVE...

...OF SOUSUKE.

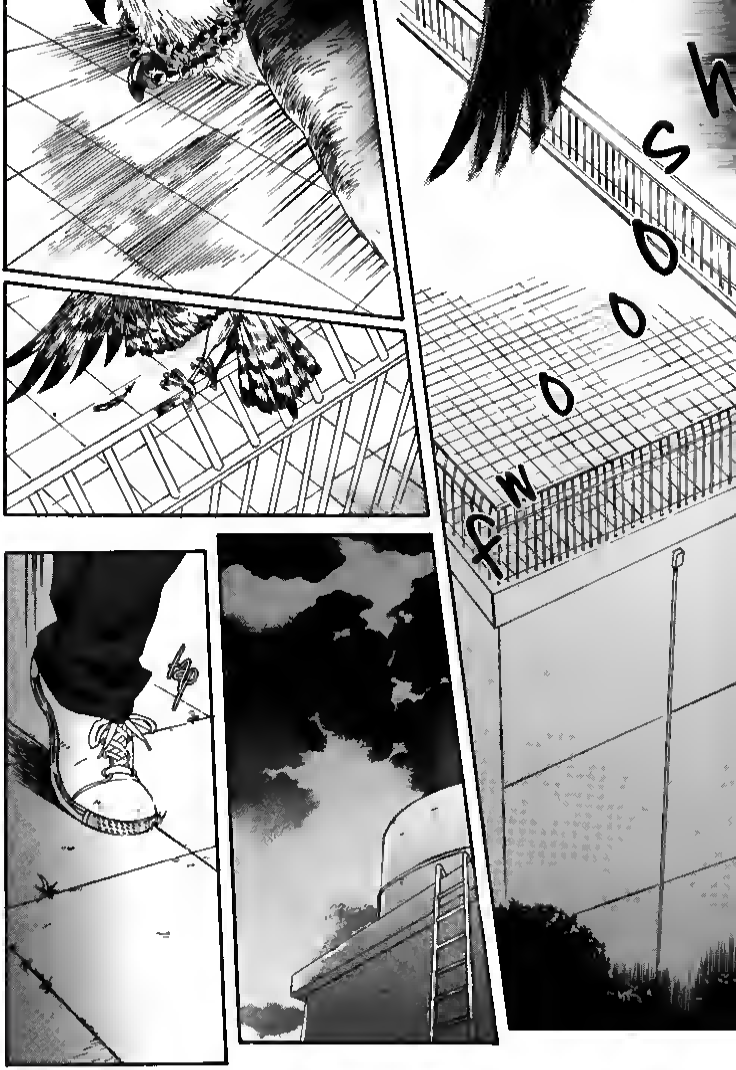
!

MAN..
I'M SORRY FOR DRAG-GING YOU INTO THIS .
OUR TEACHER IS SUCH A SLAVE DRIVER.

KASUGA-KUN?
WHAT'S WRONG?
NO.
?
IT'S NOTHING...
FOR A MOMENT...
Jolt
!?
Jolt
I THOUGHT I FELT THE PRESENCE OF A SHIKI...
WAS I JUST IMAGINING IT?

ARE YOU OKAY?
...!?
!
ARE YOU SICK?
WHAT... WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
YOU DON'T LOOK TOO GOOD
.....
...I...

WELL, THEN,
LET'S DROP THESE OFF AND GET OUT OF HERE!
I'M ALL RIGHT.
I'M JUST A LITTLE BIT TIRED.
FWUSSSS
REALLY?
TAP
.....


WOOOOOOSH
tap

LOOKS LIKE THINGS HAVE TAKEN A TURN FOR THE WORST.
.....
FLASH
rumble
rumble
rumble
SO THE KASUGA BRANCH FAMILY HAS STARTED MOVING.
AND TOUMA... IS STILL WITH THE KID FROM THE MAIN FAMILY, IS HE.

.....
SO IT'S JUST LIKE BYAKU PREDICTED...
HEY, KASUGA-KUN, DO YOU HAVE ANY SIBLINGS?
DOD

HUH?
DUNNO, NO REASON, REALLY.
WHY ARE YOU ASKING ABOUT SOMETHING LIKE THAT?
.....
CLANK
I GUESS YOU SEEM PRETTY RELIABLE, LIKE A BROTHER SHOULD BE
AND THAT'S JUST ONE OF THE STANDARD QUESTIONS, YOU KNOW.
—STANDARD?
WHAT YOU USUALLY ASK WHEN YOU FIRST MEET SOMEONE, YOU KNOW?
THESE KINDS OF QUESTIONS, I MEAN.
IT'S THE NORM, RIGHT?

.....
YOU COULD SAY THAT I DO
.....
AH!
SO YOU DO HAVE SIB-LINGS?!
THAT'S GREAT!
WHOA LOOK AT HOW CLOUDY IT IS!
THAT WAS THUNDER EARLIER, RIGHT?

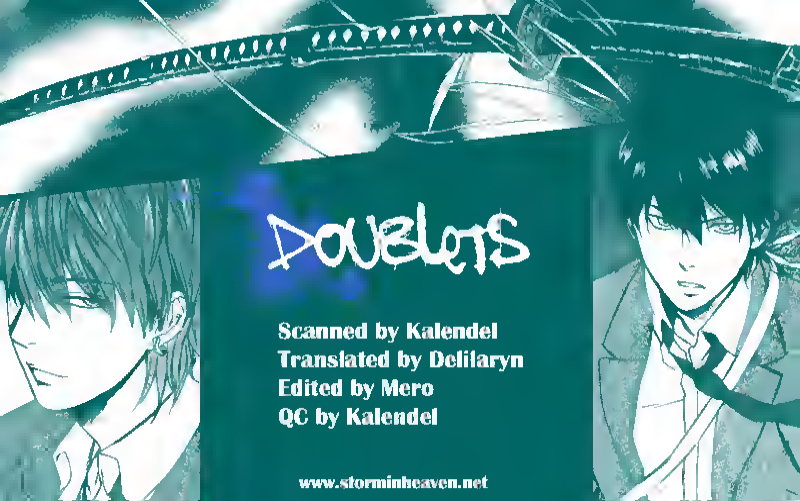
Note. "-nii" and "Nii-san" are honorifics used when addressing a brother or brother-figure.

I'VE NEVER SEEN THAT UNIFORM BEFORE.
WHOOSH
LOOK, OVER THERE...
IS HE FROM ANOTHER SCHOOL?
...HMM?
DON'T TELL ME, IS THAT A FRIEND OF YOURS? THAT'S QUITE SOME CONFIDENCE YOU GOT THERE...
BUT IT'S JUST TOO BAD.

I'VE COME TO PICK YOU UP...
NII-SAN

WHAT IS THE TRUE IDENTITY OF THE VOICE THAT CALLS THEM TOGETHER?!

eeee



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#2

Kyuugou

LISTEN, SOUSUKE.
WE, AS GUARDIANS OF THE SWORD, ARE THE ONES WHO USE - AND MAY POSSIBLY ABUSE - THE POWER OF THE SACRED SWORD
AND WE ARE TO PROTECT THE SACRED SWORD FROM THE WICKED WHO SEEK THAT POWER.
THAT IS THE NOBLE ROLE NOBLER THAN LIFE ITSELF, THAT HAS BEEN HANDED DOWN FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION IN THE KASUGA FAMILY
THE POWER THAT HAS BEEN GRANTED UNTO US TO FULFILL THAT DUTY IS ALIVE IN OUR BLOOD.
HOWEVER, BENDING THAT POWER TO YOUR OWN WILL IS HARDLY SIMPLE

*TN: a coming-of-age ceremony from the Tokugawa era that occurs when a boy turns 11

YOU HAVE SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED YOUR HAKAMAGI CEREMONY.*
YOU ARE NOW TO UNDERGO TRAINING TO LEARN HOW TO FULFILL YOUR DUTIES
KNOW THAT IT IS AN HONOR,
AND DO NOT FORGET YOUR PRIDE AS THE HEIR TO THE MAIN FAMILY
DO IT WHOLE HEARTEDLY. WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, SOUSUKE!
YES, FATHER!

おしまい
こたつを置おつかが来っています。買ったら買ったでこたつ依存になりそうでこわいです。
クロスネアどC○東京都新宿区神楽坂6-46 ローベル神楽坂ビル7F リブレ出版(株) 九重先生

...IS IT OKAY?
IS IT OKAY FOR YOU TO BE STANDING THERE SOUSUKE?
WHAT DO YOU THINK'S GOING ON RIGHT NOW...
DOWN AT THE UNDERGROUND SHRINE?

SOUSUKE.
IF ANYTHING SHOULD EVER HAPPEN TO ME, THEN YOU SHALL SUCCEED ME AS THE HEAD
THAT POWER MUST NEVER FALL INTO ANOTHER'S HANDS
DO NOT FORGET OUR DUTY!

EVERYTHING I HAD BEGAN
CRASHING DOWN AROUND ME.

Kyuugou

To fight against destiny, or to obey... choose, and desire!!
DOUBLETS
Chapter
Two
With the
Thunder

H
S
O
O
W
F

...NII-SAN...
SO...

BUT THE ATMOSPHERE BETWEEN THEM IS WEIRD...
MAYBE THEY DON'T GET ALONG ...?

.....
SPEAK OF THE DEVIL, HUH?
WHAT A COINCI-DENCE—

THAT MEANS YOU'RE KASUGA-KUN'S LITTLE BROTHER?

GET OUT OF HERE IF YOU DON'T WANT TO DIE.
HUH...?!
KAGAMI
Huh?
I DON'T HAVE THE COMPOSURE I NEED RIGHT NOW...
TO BE ABLE TO COVER YOU...!
...OHH?
READY TO GO AT IT RIGHT AWAY?
WHAT'S THIS ALL OF A SUDDEN?!
No, WAIT...
COME ON, GUYS, DON'T FIGHT...
STEP
UH

WELL, I SUPPOSE IT'S ONLY TO BE EXPECTED.
I GUESS IT MADE YOUR BLOOD BOIL...
WHEN YOUR FATHER WAS KILLED, RIGHT?
SFX BOOM
AH-
WHOA!
RUMBLE RUMBLE
A-
AN EARTH-QUAKE?!

...IS THERE SOME-THING...
RUMBLE
HUH...?
RUMBLE
RUMBLE
IN THE GROUND...?
RUMBLE
WHAT'S HE TRYIN' TO DO, TEAR DOWN THE SCHOOL?
WHOA, YOU JUST DON'T CARE ABOUT ANY-THING ELSE DO YOU?
AYA-BE!

SFX BOOM
!?
AHH...!
SFX CRACK CRACK CRACK CRACK

SFX: BOOM
Gasp
WHAT
WHAT THE HELL IS GOING...
SLIP
OW...
SHOOSH
FWOOO
.....

crumble

KA-SUGA-KUN?

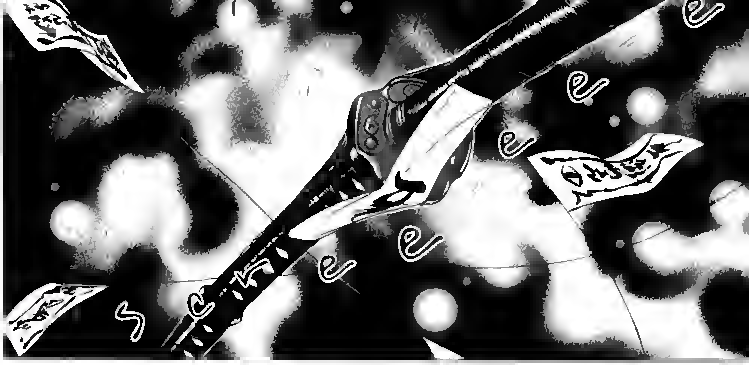
...KA...

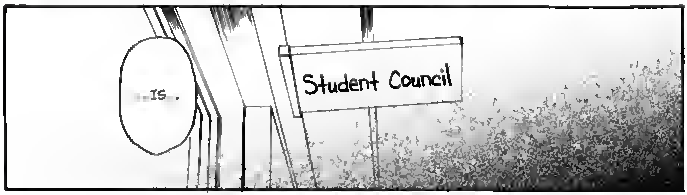
HOW DULL.
YOU KNOW *HESITATION* DULLS THE URGE TO KILL SOUSUKE
THE MORE TIME PASSES,
THE STRONGER THEY BECOME, DON'T YOU THINK?
KAP
...!!
fwip
YOU KNOW, WHEN IT COMES TO RAGE AND HATRED AND SUCH. .

AND IF YOU NEED PROOF OF THAT...
YOU'RE STILL HESITATING, EVEN NOW...
THAT'S WHY I WAITED A BIT...
BUT IT LOOKS LIKE IT'S STILL NOT ENOUGH.
WHAT...
SOU-NII!
SOUSUKE
...ARE YOU THAT AFRAID OF KILLING ME?

I THOUGHT IT WAS AN EARTH-QUAKE, AND THEN I'M SENT FLYING...
AND THEN BEFORE I KNOW IT, THE GROUND...
AND...
WHAT THE HELL?!
WHAT'S GOING ON?!
AM I DREAM-ING...?
AM
IF I'M NOT MISHEARING THINGS, THEN THERE'S SOME-THING WRONG ABOUT ALL OF THIS...
THE BITS AND PIECES OF KASUGA-KUN'S CON-VERSATION THAT I CAN HEAR...
SOMETHING BOUT KILLING, ND BEING KILLED...

THIS ISN'T THE TIME TO BE SITTING THERE IN SHOCK.
JEEZ.
TOUMA
SFX SCREEEEEE
THE TSUKUYOMI'S WAITING.




...IS .
Student Council

ARE YOU OKAY, MORINAGA?
I— I THINK SO...

IS THE EARTH-QUAKE OVER...?

YEAH...
WHY DON'T WE LEAVE, TOO?
THAT EARTHQUAKE MADE ME A BIT WORRIED ABOUT WHAT'S GOING ON AT HOME
THE WEATHER'S BEEN WEIRD, BUT IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE IT'S RAINED...
!
THAT WAS A PRETTY BAD EARTH-QUAKE...
IT'D BE CHAOS RIGHT NOW IF IT WEREN'T IN THE MIDDLE OF A TESTING PERIOD...
CLUBS ARE NORMALLY STILL GOING RIGHT ABOUT NOW...
WHOA, WHAT'S THAT...?
AND THERE'RE PEOPLE THERE!
LOOK, OVER THERE, SEE?
NEAR THE GATE?
COME LOOK AT THIS, YUIRA!
A CRACK IN THE GROUND?
HUH?!
WHAT IS THAT... THE GROUND'S SPLIT?!

TOUMA?!
!
IT'S DANGEROUS!
WHAT THE HELL IS HE DOING OVER THERE?!
AH..!
YURA?!
WAIT!
HUH?
DASH!!
I'M GOING OUT THERE!
rumble

ドクン
……
HEY, SOUSUKE
DO YOU KNOW THERE'S NO POINT IN BEING SO STUBBORN?

I HAVE NO MORE USE FOR YOU EITHER WAY.

I'LL LET YOU LIVE IF YOU JUST HAND OVER THE TSUKUYOMI.
CONSIDERING THAT WE'RE COUSINS AND ALL.
rumble

WELL...

.....

WHY DID YOU...
IORI...
WHY...
WHY DID YOU DO THAT TO FATHER...?!
WHY DID YOU GO AGAINST YOUR DUTY?!
pfft

AHA HA...
SORRY, SORRY.
YOU'RE JUST ALWAYS SO FUNNY
!?
PFFT... HEH HEH...
AHA HA HA HA!
...YOU REALLY DON'T CHANGE, DO YOU.
AND YET, YOU THINK YOU'RE ALWAYS IN THE RIGHT...
YOU JUST WALK ALONG THAT LINE THAT'S BEEN DRAWN AHEAD OF YOU NOT A SINGLE DOUBT IN YOUR MIND
BRAINWASHING, THAT'S WHAT IT IS.
NEVER DOUBTFUL OR SUSPICIOUS OF ANYTHING...
SO PURE AND INNOCENT, LIKE A FOOL...

I'VE CHANGED MY MIND...
.....
slide
IF YOUR LIFE IS SO CHEAP THAT THAT'S THE ONLY THING YOU CAN CLING TO..
DUTY?
THEN DIE. NOW.
NO!
!

Fwish

SFX: BOOM

HUH?

YUIRA.
WHAT'RE YOU DOING HERE?

!
THAT IDIOT...!!
WHAT?
SPLASH
DON'T, YURA.

DON'T COME..
KAGAMI!!
.....
YOU SHOULD JUST MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS..

TOUMA!
"TOUMA"...?

"TOUMA." YOU SAID...?
...HIM?

...!
TOUMA...!
WAKE UP...!

OH, GOD, HE WON'T STOP BLEEDING!
WHERE ARE THESE WOUNDS FROM...?
WHY DID THIS...

TOUMA!!
HANG IN THERE!

...HE WAS COVERING ME...
HE.
...!
IT'S NOT THE END YET, RIGHT?
...NOT YET.
NOT FOR YOU.

DESIRE!
...DESIRE, TOUMA.

...HUH?
WHERE AM I...?
IT'S PITCH BLACK...
HUH?
WHO IS THAT?

WHAT'S WRONG?
WHY ARE YOU CRYING?
DON'T CRY.
I'LL PROTECT YOU...

I'LL PROTECT YOU THIS TIME.

I SEE...
YOU DREW US HERE!
ALL OF US!

SFX: RUMBLE
AHA HA...!
SFX: BOOM
SFX: FLASH
EEK!
...!
SFX: RUMBLE RUMBLE

Touma has risen again. But now there is a strange light in his eyes...?!
....TOU...
MA?
CHAPTER 2 END